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PTQ1363

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ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	A-00	CEA-01	CIAE-00	CTME-00	DODE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	E-00	VC-00	FRB-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	L-00	CAC-00	VCE-00	AC-01
	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OCS-03	OMB-01	DHS-00	OPIC-01	PA-00
	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00
	STR-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	ASDS-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	DRL-02	G-00	SAS-00	/011W			

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9423
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY
USINT HAVANA PRIORITY
USCINCSO MIAMI FL PRIORITY
NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D)

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TREASURY FOR OASIA/INL - AARON JONES
NSC FOR LLORENS
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS USAID FOR DCHA/OTI - ULLRICH AND PORTER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/06/2013
TAGS: ASEC, CASC, ECON, PGOV, PREL, VE
SUBJECT: POLITICAL UPDATE: JANUARY 6, 2003

REF: CARACAS 00010 AND PREVIOUS

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR CHARLES S. SHAPIRO FOR REASONS
1.5(B) AND (D)

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1. SUMMARY:

-- (U) THE JANUARY 3 MARCH NEAR THE ARMY,S FORT TIUNA
RESULTED IN TWO CONFIRMED DEATHS, AND ONE ADDITIONAL DEATH
SUFFERED DURING THE FUNERAL WAKE FOR THE VICTIMS ON JANUARY
4.

-- (U) IN A SPEECH BROADCAST JANUARY 5 AD 6, PRESIDENT HUGO
CHAVEZ HELD THE METROPOLITAN POLICE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
JANUARY 3 AND 4 VIOLENCE. HE ALSO DECLARED THE OIL SITUATION
WELL IN HAND. HE DID NOT DECLARE A STATE OF EXCEPTION AS SOME
EXPECTED.

-- (U) THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FAILED TO REACH A QUORUM AND
THEREFORE WAS UNABLE TO OPEN THIS YEAR'S SESSION AS PLANNED
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ON JANUARY 6.

-- (U) CITING ABUSE BY GOV OFFICIALS, AIRPLANE PILOTS WORKING
FOR PDVSA JOINED THE STRIKE.

END SUMMARY.

DEATHS OVER THE WEEKEND

2. (U) THE OPPOSITION MARCH STAGED JANUARY 3 NEAR THE ARMY,S
FORT TIUNA RESULTED IN TWO CONFIRMED DEATHS RESULTING FROM
GUN FIRE AT THE EVENT. AN ELDERLY WOMAN REPORTEDLY DIED,
OVERCOME BY TEAR GAS, DURING THE FUNERAL WAKE FOR THE VICTIMS
ON JANUARY 4. THE INITIAL TWO VICTIMS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS
PRO-CHAVEZ DEMONSTRATORS WHO WERE AMONG THOSE CONFRONTING THE
OPPOSITION MARCHERS NEAR THE ENTRANCE TO THE ARMY,S FORT
TIUNA (SEE REFTEL B). THERE WAS ADDITIONAL VIOLENCE AT THE
FUNERAL FOR THE VICTIMS AS SHOTS WERE FIRED BY PASSING
VEHICLES AT THE MOURNERS AND AT THE METROPOLITAN POLICE
STATION NEAR THE FUNERAL HOME. VICE PRESIDENT JOSE VINCENTE
RANGEL VISITED MOURNERS AFTER THE INCIDENT JANUARY 4. HE AND
HALF A DOZEN MINISTERS JOINED THE FUNERAL CORTEGE THE
FOLLOWING DAY.

CHAVEZ BLAMES METROPOLITAN POLICE FOR DEATHS,

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TOUTS NORMALIZATION EFFORTS FOR OIL SUPPLY

3. (U) IN A SPEECH TELEVISED NATIONALLY JANUARY 5 AND AGAIN AT MID-DAY JANUARY 6, PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ HELD THE METROPOLITAN POLICE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE VIOLENCE ON JANUARY 3 AND 4. HE ALSO DECLARED THAT THE OIL SITUATION WAS WELL IN HAND. HIS 90 MINUTE ADDRESS, CARRIED ON ALL VENEZUELAN TV STATIONS AS WELL AS ON THE SPANISH VERSION OF CNN, ENDED NEARLY AT MIDNIGHT THE FIRST TIME IT WAS BROADCAST. IN THE SPEECH, CHAVEZ BLAMED METROPOLITAN CARACAS MAYOR ALFREDO PENA AND METROPOLITAN POLICE CHIEF HENRY VIVAS FOR THE DEATHS ON JANUARY 3-4 AND DEMANDED A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION SO THE KILLERS WOULD NOT GO UNPUNISHED. HE BEGAN HIS BROADCAST WITH UNIDENTIFIED VIDEO FOOTAGE SHOWING POLICE FIRING HANDGUNS, PRESUMABLY OUTSIDE FORT TIUNA ON JANUARY 3, AND SEPARATE FOOTAGE SHOWING PEOPLE DUCKING FOR COVER AT THE VICTIM'S WAKE ON JANUARY 4.

4. (U) CHAVEZ PRESENTED AN EXTREMELY POSITIVE PICTURE OF THE OIL SITUATION, AND HE PRAISED THE WORK OF THE NEW "PATRIOT MANAGERS," THE GENERALS, AND THE SUPPORTERS WHO ARE NOW FORMING BOLIVARIAN BRIGADES TO ENSURE OPERATIONS AT OIL FACILITIES. HE REPEATEDLY REFERRED TO THE OPPOSITION AND TO THE PDVSA STRIKERS AS TRAITORS, SABOTEURS, AND MURDERERS, AND

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ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	A-00	CEA-01	CIAE-00	CTME-00	DODE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	E-00	VC-00	FRB-00	H-01
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SPOKE OF THE CONSPIRACY OF TELEVISION STATION OWNERS. CHAVEZ
PRAISED THE SUPPORT OF PEOPLES AND GOVERNMENTS AROUND THE
REGION, SPECIFICALLY MENTIONING COLOMBIA, THE DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC, AND THE UNITED STATES. MANY HAD EXPECTED CHAVEZ TO
ANNOUNCE A STATE OF EXCEPTION DURING THIS ADDRESS.
SIGNIFICANTLY, HE DID NOT.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FAILS TO OPEN

5. (C) THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (NA) FAILED TO REACH A QUORUM
AND THEREFORE WAS UNABLE TO OPEN THIS YEAR'S SESSION AS
PLANNED ON JANUARY 6. THE FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS WAS TO HAVE
BEEN SELECTION OF ITS NEW LEADERSHIP. OUTGOING NA PRESIDENT
WILLIAN LARA TOLD REPORTERS THAT MORE THAN THE REQUIRED
EMBERS OF DEPUTIES HAD SIGNED IN, BUT THEY WERE NOT PRESENT.



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6. (C)

GOV OFFICIALS, INCLUDING VICE
PRESIDENT RANGEL, HAD LASHED OUT AT BANK OWNERS IN THE LAST
SEVERAL WEEKS FOR THE ABBREVIATED WORKING HOURS AND HAVE MADE
PUBLIC STATEMENTS CAUTIONING BANKS TO REMAIN OPEN OR RISK
MEASURES DESIGNED TO PROTECT THE &PEOPLE,S CONSTITUTIONAL
RIGHTS8 TO HAVE ACCESS TO THEIR MONEY.

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PDVSA PILOTS GO ON STRIKE

7. (U) TWELVE PILOTS OF THE PDVSA AVIATION DEPARTMENT HAVE
JOINED THE STRIKE, CITING SEVERAL IRREGULARITIES AND ABUSES.
THEY CLAIM, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THEY HAVE BEEN MADE TO CARRY
UNIDENTIFIED PERSONNEL WHO ARE NOT PDVSA EMPLOYEES WITHOUT
CEDULAS, MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE TO LEGALLY FILL OUT THEIR
FLIGHT PLAN. IN ADDITION, THE STRIKING PILOTS HAVE CLAIMED
THAT THEY HAVE HAD TO CARRY ARMS TO MEMBERS OF BOLIVARIAN
CIRCLES AND TO FARC GUERRILLAS OVER THE COLOMBIAN BORDER.
TRANSPORTING ARMS ON NON-MILITARY AIRCRAFT IS ILLEGAL.
SHAPIRO

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